

## 6/14/2004 Visit Britain: New and Restored Landscapes are Latest Additions to Britain's Renowned Gardens Heritage

The British passion for all things horticultural is centuries old, but today's gardeners and garden designers are not ones to rest on the laurels of earlier generations. New gardens have been opened to visitors for the first time this year while restoration work is bringing back to life once neglected landscapes.

These projects include a new garden on formerly abandoned land in the grounds of a medieval castle in northern England; a garden in Wales dating back to the 15th century which had fallen into decay by the 1990s; a Welsh estate once renowned for its picturesque landscape; a restored "secret garden" at one of England's grandest stately homes; and the major renovation of an industrial city's cherished gardens and parkland.

Some will not be completed for several years but visitors will be able to check out progress this year, appropriately since the Royal Horticultural Society, Britain's leading gardening charity, has designated 2004 as "*Year of Gardening*" to mark its 200th anniversary.

A new garden at **Alnwick Castle**, north-east England home of the Percy family and the Dukes of Northumberland for nearly 700 years, is the inspiration of the present Duchess who wanted to turn a derelict piece of land in the castle grounds into an imaginative public garden. When completed, the garden will cover 40 acres, including a woodland walk and two-and-a-half miles of paths, as well as pools and water displays. The garden is opened daily, except Christmas Day, and admission is £4 (\$7.20). For more information on the web: [www.alnwickgarden.com](http://www.alnwickgarden.com).

Set in the Tywel valley of Carmarthenshire, south-west Wales, **Aberglasney Gardens** inspired poets as early as the 15th century, but the property suffered a checkered history since then and by the late 20th century the house was dilapidated and the grounds overcome with weeds.

A restoration trust is creating a garden within the ruins of the house, a protected environment in which will grow a range of tender plants rarely seen in cultivation in the British Isles, such as epiphytic rhododendrons and orchids, members of the magnolia and camellia family and exotic climbers, many of them highly perfumed and flowering throughout the year. Summer events include art exhibitions and performances of Shakespeare's "*Twelfth Night*" and Mozart's opera "*Don Giovanni*." Aberglasney is opened daily, except Christmas Day, and admission is £5 (\$9). On the web: [www.aberglasney.org](http://www.aberglasney.org).

Near Aberystwyth on the coast of Mid-Wales, the **Hafod Uchtryd** estate is considered one of the finest examples in Europe of a picturesque landscape, fashionable in the 18th century and one of Wales' earliest visitor attractions with circuit walks offering a succession of views and experiences. While work continues on restoring a disused network of historic paths, two interim routes are now open for walkers year round, free of charge. On the web: [www.hafod.org](http://www.hafod.org).

**Blenheim Palace**, birthplace of Sir Winston Churchill and ancestral home of the Dukes of Marlborough in central England, has restored the "secret garden" designed by the garden-loving tenth Duke more than 50 years ago. For the first time, visitors can see the garden's original features, including unusual species of trees, shrubs and flowers, winding paths, fountains and streams. The palace is opened daily through October, but its 2,100 acres of parkland, the work of renowned landscape designer "Capability" Brown in the 18th century, is opened daily year round. Admission to the palace is £12.50 (\$22.50); park and gardens £7.50 (\$13.50) and the park in winter £2 (\$3.60). For more information on the web: [www.blenheimpalace.com](http://www.blenheimpalace.com).

Historic **Trentham** parklands and gardens in the city of Stoke-on-Trent, in the heart of the Potteries region of central England, re-opened in May. A £17 million (\$30.5 million) restoration

project will eventually feature gardens, parklands, hotels, a winery, and vacation lodges, as well as the first monkey park of its kind in Britain.

Previously the home of the Dukes of Sutherland, Trentham's original Italian Gardens were designed in the 18th century by "Capability" Brown and Sir Charles Barry and the restoration project also involves some distinguished names from today's world of horticulture, among them Chelsea Flower Show gold medal winners Piet Oudolf and Tom Stuart-Smith. As well as watching the work in progress, visitors are able to talk with some of Trentham's gardeners and designers. Trentham is opened daily and admission is from £3 (\$5.40). On the web: [www.trenthamleisure.co.uk](http://www.trenthamleisure.co.uk).

According to VisitBritain, one of the best ways to explore Britain's gardens is with the Great British Heritage Pass, which allows unlimited entry into more than 600 castles, stately homes, gardens and historic sites and properties in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In fact, holders need visit only a few of them to recoup the cost of the pass, which is priced \$35 for four days; \$54 for seven days; \$75 for 15 days; and \$102 for one month. The Great British Heritage Pass, marking its 30th anniversary this year, is available from travel agents or: BritRail, tel (877) 677 1066, web: [www.britrail.net](http://www.britrail.net); Rail Europe, tel (888) 274 8724, web: [www.raileurope.com/us](http://www.raileurope.com/us); and Tickets To...Inc., tel: (800) 869 8184, web: [www.ticketsto.com](http://www.ticketsto.com).

To help visitors discover these and other gardens in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, VisitBritain has published a free guide called "*Britain's Gardens*," available from VisitBritain's Travel Center, Suite 701, 551 Fifth Avenue (at 45th Street), in New York City, Mondays through Fridays between 9.00am and 6.00pm. VisitBritain's Travel Center can also be reached via email at: [travelinfo@visitbritain.org](mailto:travelinfo@visitbritain.org) or telephone on Toll Free: 877 899 8391. Online: [www.visitbritain.com/usagardens](http://www.visitbritain.com/usagardens), where visitors can order the guide online and have the chance to win a trip to Britain.

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